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SUBJECT: FEB 27 NIGERIA AVIAN FLU UPDATE

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**¶1.** (SBU) Summary. On February 26, the GON confirmed the presence of AI in two more states, Yobe and Nasarawa. Though not confirmed, it is almost certainly in Jigawa. Currently four states and the Federal Capital Territory have had samples confirmed H5N1 positive through the FAO laboratory in Rome (Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Territory); two additional states have been confirmed by the Vom National Veterinary Research Institute as having Avian Influenza type A (Nasarawa and Yobe); and poultry die-offs have been reported and samples taken for testing from four additional northern states (Borno, Jigawa, Katsina, and Sokoto) and from four southern states (Ogun, Delta, Rivers, and Abia). At the Feb. 24 briefing at Nigeria's AI Crisis Management Center, a CDC official said Nigeria's human-surveillance system likely is not currently strong enough to detect AI in humans. The CDC, WHO, and GON met on Feb. 23 to formulate procedures to contend with human cases of AI. The GON must decide soon whether to adopt a policy of bird immunizations. A USAID official reiterated the need for the GON to adopt rapidly a policy on compensation for culled birds. End summary.

**¶2.** (U) At the Feb. 24 briefing at the Government of Nigeria's (GON) Avian Influenza (AI) Crisis Management Center, a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) official noted that Nigeria's existing human-surveillance system probably was not currently strong enough to detect AI in humans. The CDC and other international partners are aiding the MOH to develop specific processes and procedures for improving surveillance and handling cases. This information should be disseminated to the field this week, and the federal Ministry must follow up to ensure that the processes and procedures are implemented.

**¶3.** (U) A World Health Organization (WHO) official said 5,000 sets of personal protective equipment (PPE) are to be delivered to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for use in animal health, and 2,500 more are being packed into kits. A GON official said 1,355 PPEs were sent to the field on Feb. 23, with 300 of these going to Kano. CDC said PPEs were disposable and technically designed for one-time use. Portions of the equipment could be reused with appropriate decontamination procedures; gloves and masks

cannot be reused. In addition to full PPEs, larger numbers of gloves and masks should be ordered. An FAO official said it was difficult to get detailed price quotes for rapid, local purchases of equipment.

Tamiflu and bird vaccinations

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¶ 14. (U) A CDC official explained there was not a strong justification for cullers to be given Tamiflu routinely, based on the experience of cullers in Asia. Tamiflu, however, may be used on an exposed person if there has been significant exposure to infectious material from infected animals. A USAID official indicated that cullers could receive, as a precaution, a seasonal human-influenza inoculation two weeks before beginning culling operations. Nigeria currently had no stock of human-influenza vaccine.

¶ 15. (SBU) As of Feb. 26, processes and procedures developed by the CDC, WHO, and GON to treat human cases of AI, were ready for dissemination to the field. The federal government will need to follow up to ensure that the processes and procedures are implemented at the state level. The MOH said the GON planned to increase its surveillance of humans and birds, and that the GON must decide soon whether to adopt a policy of bird immunizations. A USAID official said the GON also must monitor wild birds. Infected domestic birds apparently have passed AI to wild birds -- which threaten to spread AI back to domestic birds elsewhere. The FAO is calling for bird vaccinations in Nigeria. The USG is providing Nigeria with information about the advantages and drawbacks of bird vaccinations, but is not making a recommendation. GON officials said they did not want to inoculate birds, if AI could be contained in

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Kano. (Comment: This is a very worrying sign of denial about the seriousness of the AI situation. AI is neither contained in Kano, nor confined to Kano. End comment.)

Compensation must precede bird culling

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¶ 16. (U) On Feb. 25 the government announced that culling was proceeding according to provisions in the animal disease control law. A USAID official said Kano State alone had many kilometers' worth of infected birds, and that "hundreds" of culling teams would be needed to properly carry out culling operations there. USG officials reiterated the need for the GON to rapidly adopt a concrete compensation policy for culled birds, especially as culling moved to smaller operations. A WHO official said the GON AI Steering Committee decided on Feb. 24 that compensation will start to be "implemented" on Feb. 28. A GON official said the agriculture minister decided Feb. 23 that the payment of compensation will begin in some northern states on Feb. 27. The MOH chair called for the FAO to provide by the end of Feb. 25 a written strategy on how to address AI. The FAO, USAID, and the Pan-African Program for Control of Epizootics completed by Feb. 26, with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), an operational plan that has been presented to senior MOA officials.

Other

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¶ 17. (U) Updates over the weekend indicated the following: Currently four states and the Federal Capital Territory have had samples confirmed H5N1 positive through the FAO laboratory in Rome (Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Territory); two additional states have been confirmed by the Vom National Veterinary Research Institute, near Jos, as having Avian Influenza type A (Nasarawa and Yobe); and poultry die-offs have been reported and samples taken for testing from four additional northern states (Borno, Jigawa, Katsina, and Sokoto) and from four southern

states (Ogun, Delta, Rivers, and Abia). The MOH noted an unconfirmed report of "something" having appeared in Ilorin, west of Abuja. Nigeria's AI Crisis Management Center reported Feb. 25 that samples from Zamfara State were mislabeled and were not actually from Zamfara, but were from the neighboring state of Katsina. Thus, previously reported information from the GON indicating that samples from poultry die-offs from Zamfara were sent for testing was incorrect.

-- (U) Channel TV in Lagos reported on Feb. 24 that villagers in Bauchi chased out officials charged with culling chickens infected by AI.

-- (U) The Nigerian minister of agriculture and rural development signed into law on Feb. 23 the regulation restricting the movement of poultry and poultry products within Nigeria.

-- (U) Veterinary-health, laboratory, and associated personnel will meet on Feb. 27 for a five-day training program at the Vom National Veterinary Research Institute. The training was organized by the Ministries of Health and Agriculture, the WHO, CDC, and FAO. CDC laboratory personnel will be conducting the training. The training will focus on laboratory methods and procedures for screening and diagnosing AI.

-- (U) An FAO-led program on strategies for controlling and managing AI will be held in Kaduna, because of its central location, starting on Feb. 28. Participants will include members of the Technical Coordination Committee of Experts for the Prevention and Control of Avian Influenza; and state directors of veterinary services, directors of public health, epidemiologists, and laboratory officers from Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. A similar, longer event will be held in Kano in early March.

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¶18. (SBU) Comment: The frustration expressed at this meeting by officials of international organizations and the USG was noticeably higher than at the start of the week. These officials pointed out that now is the time for action by GON officials. Some Nigerian officials conceded that their government needs to do better, while other GON officials reacted defensively. International experts, however, are basically unanimous that it only a matter of time until avian influenza affects all of Nigeria and its neighbors. End comment.

CAMPBELL